



## **DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

### **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

#### **50 CFR Part 679**

**[Docket No. 210217-0022]**

**RTID 0648-XB563**

#### **Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Ocean Perch in the Bering Sea Subarea of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area**

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Temporary rule; closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific ocean perch in the Bering Sea subarea of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2021 Pacific ocean perch total allowable catch (TAC) in the Bering Sea subarea of the BSAI.

**DATES:** Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), December 14, 2021, through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2021.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Allyson Olds, 907-586-7228.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the BSAI according to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (FMP) prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Regulations governing fishing by U.S. vessels in accordance with the FMP appear at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679.

The 2021 Pacific ocean perch TAC in the Bering Sea subarea of the BSAI is 10,782 metric tons (mt) as established by the final 2021 and 2022 harvest specifications

for groundfish in the BSAI and groundfish reserve release (86 FR 11449, February 25, 2021, and 86 FR 64827, November 19, 2021).

The Regional Administrator has determined that the 2021 TAC for Pacific ocean perch in the Bering Sea subarea of the BSAI will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 10,712 mt, and is setting aside the remaining 70 mt as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. Consequently, in accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific ocean perch in the Bering Sea subarea of the BSAI. While this closure remains in effect the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a trip.

#### **Classification**

NMFS issues this action pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This action is required by 50 CFR part 679, which was issued pursuant to section 304(b), and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), there is good cause to waive prior notice and an opportunity for public comment on this action, as notice and comment would be impracticable and contrary to the public interest, as it would prevent NMFS from responding to the most recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the closure of Pacific ocean perch Bering Sea subarea in the BSAI. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because the most recent, relevant data only became available as of December 13, 2021.

The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3). This finding is based upon the reasons provided above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: December 14, 2021.

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Ngagne Jafnar Gueye,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

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